

Remarks

Reconsideration of this Application is respectfully requested.

Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 27-53 are pending in the application, with claim 27 being the single independent claims. No claims are sought to be cancelled. New claim 53 is sought to be added. No claims are amended herein. These changes are believed to introduce no new matter, and their entry is respectfully requested.

Based on the above amendment and the following remarks, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner rejected claims 27-52 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,194,106 to Bretscher *et al.* or U.S. Patent No. 6,380,294 to Babinec *et al.*

Neither reference is prior art to the present application. This patent application claims priority to and is therefore entitled to the filing date of provisional patent application No. 60/038,189, which was filed on February 14, 1997. The Bretscher reference issued on February 27, 2001. Its earliest effective filing date is November 30, 1999. The Babinec reference issued on April 30, 2002. Its earliest effective filing date is October 17, 1997. Thus, the earliest effective filing dates of either the Bretscher reference or the Babinec reference are still after the priority date of the present application. Thus, Bretscher and Babinec references are not prior art to the present

application under 35 U.S.C. § 102, and thus may not be a source of rejection for the present application.

Applicants therefore respectfully request the withdrawal of the present 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection and the favorable treatment of claim 27-53.


Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment and Reply is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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